the action was. That manifested itself in a couple of ways. One was the fact that I never did get to be a company commander. I came back from Vietnam and they asked me what I wanted do and I said, "I want to go somewhere and be a company commander." Even then you understood you needed to be a company commander. Then they sent me to the Chicago District. I said, "There's nothing wrong with the Chicago District but, guys, I need to be a company commander." They said, "No, you have plenty of time for that."

So, my friend Jim Ellis, who, as I mentioned, had almost a comparable career to this point, got ready to come back and they said, "You need to be a company commander." Wait a minute! So, classmates at West Point, 3d Armored Division together, Vietnam together, civil school together, I mean, how can what you've "got to do" be so different? Besides that, though, they were correct with him, but not with me. So, anyway, I went to the Chicago District. He went to company command.

The second manifestation was that it was okay and a good assignment because after I'd been in the Chicago District for a couple of years, the promotion list to major came out and I was on it, below the zone, as was Jim Ellis. So, you say, "Well, what about company command?" The answer *was,* I was an adviser in Vietnam, and so there was a recognition of that experience at that time. I'm not recommending that today—not commanding a company is a very precarious position to be in. It is that important. In those days, with Vietnam being what it was and because the battalion adviser was recognized as a very close to the action kind of role, it was a good assignment. As I mentioned earlier, it was a good assignment from the standpoint of satisfaction and feeling of contribution.

Chicago District

Q: The Chicago District was your first civil works assignment?

A: Yes, as I mentioned before, I met my wife Ann when she was coming from Illinois to Germany. So, we met in Europe. "Join the Army, see the world," the saying goes. Then she spent our first three assignments back in Illinois, her home state, that being the University of Illinois, then she stayed at home in Waukegan the year I was in Vietnam, and then we were reassigned to the Chicago District. So, her first three assignments were right in Illinois.

Q: So, you got there, then, in March or April?

A: I think it was still March when we reported in.

Q: Of 1963. Went in as executive officer?

A: Yes.

Q: Colonel Joe Smedle was the district engineer.

A: He left that summer. Most of my time there was under Colonel John Mattina. Lieutenant Colonel Ken Hartung was the deputy district engineer. Brigadier General Rogers was the North Central Division Engineer.

That's where I again learned it's not good to be too close to the flagpole. I'd go down for a routine bid opening and there would be General Rogers in the back of the room, ready to critique how I opened bids.

Q: Everything right there at Chicago. So, this is your first civil works assignment?

Captain Kem, Deputy District Engineer, Chicago District, and Ann Kem in 1965.

A: That's right, first district assignment. I should explain, the Chicago District at that time was not the very small Chicago District of today. It had some 1,400 people as opposed to, I believe, about 130 today. We had military construction responsibilities and we also had procurement responsibilities. This was before the Defense Logistics Agency was established, and we bought all kinds of things for the Army that later were to be procured by either the Army Materiel Command or the Defense Logistics Agency. We also had sizable civil works responsibilities: the entire Wisconsin coast of Lake Michigan, the Illinois Waterway, and over in Indiana we had the Dunes State Park, with the "Save the Dunes" issue, and Indiana Harbor. We had the Cal–Sag Waterway, the connection between the Great Lakes and the Illinois Waterway leading to the Mississippi. Thus, we had the lakes level issue, where the

water level has gone up and down several times during the years. I was there during a down period. So, it was a very interesting time for me.

Q: That was quite a transition, engineer adviser in Vietnam to exec in the Chicago District.

A: Sure, after you live in a mud hut for a while—

Q: Went swimming with the liver flukes.

Q: Liver flukes, and had the creatures running over the mat ceiling.

A: You got to have a balanced meal too.

Q: That's right, no peas for breakfast.

Q: So, there was a lot of boning up needed pretty quickly, I guess, when you got to Chicago, the district itself?

A: No, the executive officer position was one where you're working in the command group and it's paper flow, and they did that on purpose. It was supposed to be, as the Corps was doing back then, a developmental assignment. The Corps really did a pretty good job back then of trying to get all engineer captains, especially out of civil school, back in the districts to have that experience. They had not done it in Chicago for some years before I arrived because they thought the area was too expensive.

Why I got to be the guinea pig, I don't know, because it was still too expensive when I was there. Since it cost a lot, I lived far out, in Park Forest. I commuted in by the Illinois Central Railroad, about an hour and a half commute every day. The idea was that I'd spend a year in the office and then a year in the field somewhere. It could have started the other way. I don't quite know why the district engineer did it that way except I guess he thought that was the best way. The idea was his that I would be the executive officer. I didn't replace anybody. I became one extra part of the paper flow so I could get the breadth and the perspective of what was going on. I would sit in when the deputy and the district engineer did their things and I could pick up the flavor of what was going on. So, it really was not a dramatic, difficult transition, but designed to move me onto a ramp of learning.

Q: What sorts of problems was the district facing when you got there? Deepening some of the harbors and waterways, I guess, was a concern with the anticipated new generation of ships on the Great Lakes.

A: Well, it's like all district engineers face. They're at some point in the cycle for a whole bunch of general projects. They're either in early planning, finishing plan formulation, in design, or in construction, so some are in all those realms. We were doing a lot of work on the Calumet Saginaw Channel as a connector. We were widening it. So, that included real estate acquisition, widening the channel—that's dredging, plus replacing something like 31 bridges that had to be reconstructed to make longer spans. They were mostly railroad in an industrial

area. So, that was a major ongoing design, construct, and real estate acquisition mission over several years.

Then there were the early planning things, such as deepening and providing breakwaters at ports, like at Indiana Harbor. This one was really enmeshed in the process because there was a threat to the beautiful dunes of northern Indiana on Lake Michigan. This was far in advance of the kind of environmental consciousness in the Corps as today. There was a "Save the Dunes" committee that said, "Don't let the steel companies come in and build steel mills there," but the companies owned the land. They were going to do a lot of construction. The Corps project was to deepen the harbor and build the breakwater. The strategy of the "Save the Dunes" people was to prohibit us from deepening the harbor and building the breakwater; then they could prohibit the steel mills from coming in. The steel company already owned the dune in question and could have carved it down. The nation and the Corps weren't talking environment in those days, and "environment" wasn't the word used. It was "Save the Dunes." Put in today's vernacular, we were talking environment, keeping our quality of life, the things that we think are good for us. We shouldn't just throw something away in a cause of development.

So, I went to a couple of hearings. I didn't preside at those hearings, but I was a participant. It was a real eye-opener. So, that was one of the major things the district was doing.

We also had a project to provide safe haven harbors for small boats all up the coast of Lake Michigan on the Wisconsin shoreline. That was a considerable endeavor with many town meetings and planning sessions.

After I'd been there a while the district engineer tried to get me out and involved in doing other things. However, Colonel Ken Hartung, the deputy district engineer, was alerted to go to Vietnam and all of a sudden it was decided that the deputy position would not be filled. We would only get two officers per district. So, John Mattina was left with this captain to be his deputy district engineer. That's how I got to be a deputy. What that also meant, though, was I was not going to get that second year of experience in the field. My one year in the office was going to become two, executive officer, then deputy. It had both good points and bad.

I didn't get to go to the field—I'll talk about that in a minute—but I did get to be the deputy with that substantive kind of role and greater responsibilities and understanding. I now was dealing with resources and allocations and all the rest, rather than just being an exec and passing papers.

To cover this loss of the field experience, before Lieutenant Colonel Hartung left, they sent me for a month on the Illinois Waterway to get a feel for waterway operations. So, I worked at Joliet Lock and Dam. On the lock wall I was passing tows through—handling the lines and working the buoys, and then the machinery as we'd lock the boats through. Then I went out for a week with a maintenance crew as they repaired tainter gates and sent divers down to go through the lock culverts. That was a pretty neat blue-collar experience that later on, when I

was division engineer in the Ohio River Division, the operations folks would come up to talk about the need for maintenance, and I had a first-hand feeling for it.

I was also sent out to be the district's representative on the master planning board down at the Granite City Army Depot in the St. Louis area. I was sent out not only to show the green-suit side of the district, but also for my development, to give me some experience in that arena.

I also spent a month with real estate, working two ways. First, we had a relatively weak Real Estate Division and the district engineer wanted to get an extra set of eyes and ears down there to figure out what was wrong. Second, I went down to help them, too, with trying to come to grips with some of the acquisitions along the Cal–Sag Waterway.

They sent me to the Savannah Army Depot in Illinois on the Missouri River. There was a housing project over there, and I became the project manager, in the Engineering Division, to get that design under way. We had a cost limitation and I was—my salary was paid by OMA [Operations and Maintenance, Army]—I was free to the project. That was a separate motivation, but for me it was an extra valuable experience.

Because I was going to be the deputy and not have the opportunity now to go out for field experience the second year, the district engineer put me into each of these experiences so I'd have a broader feel for district operations.

I should mention that General Rogers was replaced by a person at that time who really became a long-term mentor for me, a person I greatly respected. That was Brigadier General Bill Gribble. He came out to be the North Central Division Engineer but spent, I guess, only several months there and then was pulled back to be the Deputy Chief of Research and Development for the Army. He certainly was to figure in my successive career numerous times.

Q: That's quite an assignment, to be 28 years old, and a captain, to be a deputy in a district of 1,400 people. Pretty unusual.

A: I had an accelerated learning experience, there's no doubt about it.

Q: In Chicago?

A: In Chicago, right.

Q: Did you learn about Chicago politics as well?

A: No.

Q: Not so, hanging around the head office?

A: No, I didn't get involved too much with Chicago politics, nor did the district engineer in those days. We were all active in the Society for American Military Engineers. I remember getting really involved there. On the home front, our second child John was born.

Q: You mentioned earlier doing quite a bit of military construction work in the Chicago District during this time. What sort of projects were going on there?

A: I don't recall many of the military construction projects. The Savannah Depot one I mentioned. I remember another big real estate activity we had at the time was at Camp Atterbury, Indiana. This was where I really became involved in the politics of things and sensitivities. There was an outfit called the Amateur Rocketeers of America. They wanted to build model rockets and have a firing range at Camp Atterbury and set them off. They had a very aggressive entrepreneur who was heading that organization. He had written to ask for these approvals, and he had been denied repeatedly by us because of safety problems. He had called upon political friends to bring pressure on us to yield to his wishes. I was designated—this is when I was deputy—to be the point of contact to deal with him. The district engineer would not talk to him, and each time I talked to him we had the district counsel in the office.

We started referring to this person, in jest, as the "Amateur Racketeer of America" because he really was fleecing a lot of people. He published a magazine, supposedly monthly, which came out about every time he felt that he needed more contributions. We were very concerned with safety. He was going to take kids out on Army property and going to fire rockets—I mean, we're not talking about your everyday model airplane club.

We had asked him to submit plans on how he intended to take care of safety, and he would submit plans for a block house. We would evaluate the engineering and come back and say, "No, that's inadequate. You need glass ports. Viewing ports need to be this size and this thickness," and all these other things. He would argue back and then he would advertise that there's going to be a great rocket firing on X date. There was no way we were going to give them permission to build before that date. Then he'd bring pressure on us to let them fire anyway in spite of the fact that safety construction hadn't been done. It was really tempestuous, and he was really trying to put the Army out on a limb. He wasn't so worried about his own limbs or the limbs of the youths that he was going to bring out there. So, he advertised and marketed a greater game than the operation that he followed up with. It just happened to be on a military installation, inactive as it was, but a problem for us.

I'm trying to think of what other military projects we had.

Q: An ordnance facility at Joliet during this time?

A: I don't recall work there.

Q: What about work for others? Were you working for any other agencies?

A: Not that I know of.

Q: Not any other work.

A: We really didn't use that term, work for others, back then like we've picked up in the lexicon since then. We may well have.

Q: Would you have had much contact with state agencies, Illinois, or other federal agencies?

A: No, I didn't because, I guess, the Chief of Planning would do those kinds of interactions, like now. Colonel Mattina would do those kinds of things, but I was not involved. We would know that the state of Indiana was at the public meetings we had at Indiana Harbor and for the dunes issue, but I didn't have personal interaction with them.

Q: The Corps ran the public meetings.

A: Yes.

Q: Were you involved much with those in terms of—

A: Yes, I helped put them up, sat at the front table, and helped put them on. I did not preside; the district engineer presided.

Q: Before we move on, maybe we could talk just a little bit more about the public meetings. I've noted later that the Corps' role in that kind of activity in the federal government is kind of a pioneering one, and I think maybe this is a very early example of that kind of thing, and so that's kind of what I'd like if you could address that.

A: Sure. Now, mind you, I was just coming into the civil work business, so as far as I know what we were doing was old hat. I didn't know that we were doing these public meetings for the first time or a second time. I recall that about that time there were Corps publications—I think developed by what's probably now the Institute of Water Resources—on how to conduct public meetings. We had that kind of document and I read it because I was involved with doing it.

For instance, the big one, the famous one at the time because it was such a *cause célèbre,* was the Indiana Harbor, "Save the Dunes" affair. There were strong antidevelopment forces, and there were strong development forces. Our planning folks, who ran the public meeting with great help from Public Affairs, put on what was to be a very contentious public meeting. We were going with the rudiments, and so I was learning. We approached it in a rather structured way. We'd try to take the contentiousness out of it and make sure everyone had a chance to be heard so the district engineer wouldn't be backed into a corner. We were looking for options; we were developing a way and an approach. There were media there; there were people for both sides of the question; and there were other interests, without doubt to include federal and state.

I think we probably ran a textbook public meeting, looking back on it, I would say. What I observed my district engineer run that day, with his staff, was a textbook public meeting.

I went to several others. I remember one incident that had a note of humor to it. We were looking for harbors of refuge for the small boats that would go out and ply Lake Michigan on

the weekend. We went into one Wisconsin town and held a public meeting, and there really were a lot of attendees. A few people got up and said things, but not many.

I remember the Fish and Wildlife fellow, a crusty local. He didn't bring any national or regional or state perspective; he brought the local perspective. To remind you, our district engineer's name was John Mattina. After two hours of meeting, Colonel Mattina said, "Well, now, is there anything else? Anybody else who wants to be heard?" The fellow stood and said, "Colonel Martini, I'm from Fish and Wildlife, and I don't know what I think about this project, but I want to reserve the right to say that whatever it is, when we figure it out, we'll let you know."

So, we all smiled inwardly that we were down here at grassroots America. It was his right to say that, and he certainly put a caveat onto the system in his own way.

Now, there are some who say that Fish and Wildlife hasn't changed to this day, that, in fact, there is no chain, that there isn't a national perspective. Well-meaning as this fellow was, and they all are, there isn't a national Fish and Wildlife perspective that influences them all. It will vary here and there, and there's not a cohesive kind of thought.

Q: At the time, did you see this controversy as anything different? As portending anything for the future?

A: Just to save the dunes?

Q: The dunes, as portending the future environmental movement.

A: No. I'm from Indiana and I've been up to the dunes area on vacations, and so I knew there was a very valuable tract and a lot of people enjoyed the area. I tried to rationalize my position then, but now, today, I'd probably be more adamant on the side of, "Hey, we're talking environment here. We've got to have sustainable development. How can we save the best of all of this stuff? Why can't we do something different?" I think my feeling at the time was, "This is property owned by the steel mill. The steel mill has every right to do what they want with the property." They didn't need the hearing to raze the dune. They could have scraped the dune down from the start, and then there would have been nothing left to debate.

We were trying to talk about, "Do we proceed with the harbor?" The antimill, the "Save the Dunes" folks, probably rightfully, saw that their only hope at stopping steel development was to stop federal funds for a harbor development, which would make it more economically justifiable for the steel mill to build a mill and thereby take down the dunes. If they could stop the harbor, they could stop the steel company and save the dunes.

So, much like today in our Corps permit process, the district engineer is caught in the middle and responsible to make important decisions. Back then, the district engineer did not have quite the same regulatory function, but was caught in his own dilemma of trying to find a solution that would make everybody happy.